

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5832

S E C R E T DAMASCUS 0186

NODIS/CHEROKEE

FOR SECRETARY FROM AMBASSADOR

EO 11652: XGDS-3

TAGS: PFOR, SY, UNSC

SUBJECT: ASAD'S UNHAPPINESS OVER PROSPECTS FOR SC RESOLUTION

REF: DAMASCUS 0145

1. SUMMARY: THERE COULD BE ADVANTAGE IN URGING SYRIANS TO END SC DEBATE WITH NO RESOLUTION. END SUMMARY.

2. ON JANUARY 12 A SYRIAN BUSINESSMAN, WHOM I HAVE KNOWN FOR MANY YEARS AND WHO HAS BEEN CLOSE TO ASAD FOR PAST FIVE YEARS, CALLED ON ME TO DISCUSS HIS JANUARY 8 MEETING WITH THE PRESIDENT. THEY HAD TALKED MOSTLY ABOUT THE UPCOMING SC DEBATE AND HE DESCRIBED ASAD AS CLEARLY UNHAPPY ABOUT THE PROSPECTS OF A US VETO OF A RESOLUTION ENDING THE DEBATE. ASAD RECOGNIZED THAT SYRIANS HAD NO ONE TO BLAME BUT THEMSELVES FOR HAVING INSISTED ON THE SC HEARING. ASAD SAID HE HAD NOW CONCLUDED THAT THERE LITTLE OR NO LIKELIHOOD THAT ANY RESOLUTION SYRIA WOULD TABLE COULD ESCAPE A US VETO AND EMPHASIZED THIS HAD NOT BEEN HIS IDEA IN CALLING FOR THE DEBATE.

3. SOURCE TOLD ASAD HE PERSONALLY FELT SOVIETS, FORESEEING LIKELY OUTCOME, HAD ENCOURAGED SYRIA'S
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CALL FOR THIS DEBATE. ONLY THE SOVIETS, HE ARGUED,

STOOD TO BENEFIT FROM A US VETO WHICH WOULD MAKE IT THAT MUCH HARDER FOR ASAD IN THE FUTURE TO PICK UP THE PIECES AND WORK WITH THE USG IN THE PEACE PROCESS.

4. SOURCE ASKED IF I SAW ANY WAY OUT OF THIS DILEMMA. I ACKNOWLEDGED THAT THE SYRIAN AND AMERICAN POSITIONS ON ACCEPTABLE TEXTS WERE FAR APART AND DOUBTED, ON BASIS MY CONTACTS THUS FAR WITH SYRIAN LEADERSHIP, THAT GAP WAS BRIDGEABLE. WE HAD MADE OUR POSITION CLEAR INTER ALIA THAT WE WERE NOT GOING TO SEE SC DRAGGED INTO A MINDLESS ENDORSEMENT OF GA POSITIONS. SOURCE SAID HE HAD MADE SAME COMMENT TO PRESIDENT LAST THURSDAY AND CHALLENGED PRESIDENT TO SAY WHERE HE WAS GOING IN SEARCH OF POLITICAL SOLUTION AFTER HIS RESOLUTION RECEIVED US VETO. ASAD, HE SAID, HAD NO ANSWER.

5. WE THEN DISCUSSED THE POSSIBILITY OF SC DEBATE ENDING WITH NO RESOLUTION. SAID I BELIEVED SYRIA WOULD INSIST ON ONE. IF, HOWEVER, ASAD DECIDED HE COULD LIVE WITHOUT RESOLUTION, I PERSONALLY FELT THAT THAT WOULD BE CLEARLY PREFERABLE TO US VETO IN TERMS OF LIMITING DAMAGE TO SYRO-AMERICAN TIES IF WE COULD NOT REACH AGREEMENT ON RESOLUTION TEXT. SYRIANS COULD MAKE A STRONG CONCLUDING STATEMENT AND THEN DECLARE, FOR EXAMPLE, THAT IT HAD NOT COME TO SC DELIBERATELY SEEKING VETO OR TO EMBARRASS ANY POWER BUT TO ADVANCE THE PALESTINIAN CAUSE; IT HAD NO INTEREST IN PITTING SOVIETS AND AMERICANS AGAINST ONE ANOTHER. CONTINUED EFFORTS OF ALL WERE NEEDED TO SECURE A JUST PEACE, ETC. SINCE THE COUNCIL WAS NOT READY TO SUPPORT A "POSITIVE" RESOLUTION, SYRIA HAD DECIDED TO WITHDRAW ITS TEXT AND WOULD PURSUE OTHER WAYS TO ASSIST THE PALESTINIANS. SOURCE COMMENTED THAT IF SYRIANS ACCEPTED THIS PROCEDURE THEY COULD LEAVE NEW YORK WITH UNUSUALLY STATESMANLIKE IMAGE.

6. I WILL SEE SOURCE AGAIN ON JANUARY 15. UNLESS THIS WOULD CONFLICT WITH YOUR TACTICS FOR THE DEBATE, I SUGGEST THAT
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I URGE SOURCE TO GO BACK TO ASAD AND MAKE SOME OF ABOVE POINTS ABOUT THE ADVANTAGE OF ENDING WITH NO RESOLUTION, IF COMING DAYS DEMONSTRATE OUR RESPECTIVE POSITIONS ON ACCEPTABLE RESOLUTION ARE IRRECONCILABLE. HE WOULD DO SO WITH NO ATTRIBUTION TO US. HOWEVER, IF YOU THINK IT DESIRABLE, I COULD MYSELF PASS SAME IDEA TO EITHER KHADDAM OR ASAD'S POLITICAL COUNSELOR DAOUDI TOWARDS END OF THIS WEEK.

MURPHY

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